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Evaluation of Koçarlı Adnan Menderes urban forest in terms of the ecotourism

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to evaluate the natural and ecological features of Kocarli Adnan Menderes Urban Forest with regard to the suitability for ecotourism. Design suggestions will be presented to develop the Urban Forest. Continuity in public transportation will eliminate the problems of access. Kocarli Adnan Menderes Urban Forest is not only a very considerable ecotourism area for people who live in Kocarli and near villages but also for people living in Aydin and other districts. Activities in Kocarli Adnan Menderes Urban Forest ensure social and cultural improvement of the people and economic development of the region.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the global economy and developing countries are attempting to cash in on this expanding industry in an attempt to boost foreign investment and financial reserves. While conceding that the uncontrolled growth of this industry can result in serious environmental and social problems, the United Nations contends that such negative effects can be controlled and reduced [1].

Tourism is globally sector. As the largest business sector in the world economy, the Travel and Tourism industry is responsible for over 230 million jobs and over 10% of the gross domestic product worldwide. In 2006, Travel and Tourism (consumption, investment, government spending and exports) is expected to grow 4.6% and total US\$6.5 trillion [2].

Tourism in Developing Countries is very important for economical development of them. Tourism is a principle "export" (foreign exchange earner) for 83% of developing countries, and the leading export for 1/3 of poorest countries. For the world's 40 poorest countries, tourism is the second most important source of foreign exchange, after oil [2].

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There are several descriptions about ecotourism. According to the one of the description of the ecotourism, ecotourism is: Ecotourism is "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people." Sometimes it is defined as a sub-category of sustainable tourism or a segment of the larger nature tourism market [3].

Another description comprises the social dimension of the ecotourism. Ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel. This means that those who implement and participate in ecotourism activities should follow the following ecotourism principles:

In many countries there is a growing understanding of the importance of the natural ecology in urban forests [4].

An urban forest is a forest or a collection of trees that grow within a city, town or a suburb. In a wider sense it may include any kind of woody plant vegetation growing in and around human settlements. In a narrower sense (also called forest park) it describes areas whose ecosystems are inherited from wilderness leftovers or remnants [4].

Urban forests play an important role in ecology of human habitats in many ways: they filter air, water, sunlight, provide shelter to animals and recreational area for people. They moderate local climate, slowing wind and stormwater, and shading homes and businesses to conserve energy. They are critical in cooling the urban heat island effect, thus potentially reducing the number of unhealthy ozone days that plague major cities in peak summer months [4].

2. Functions and Values of Urban Forest

In urban environments, forest functions are frequently related to the human environment. Urban forest functions are thus often oriented toward human outcomes, such as shade, beauty, and privacy.

Urban forests improve air quality, absorb rainwater, improve biodiversity and potentially allow recycling to 20% of waste which is wood-based [5].

Visiting green areas in cities can counteract the stress of city life, renew vital energy and restore attention, and improve medical outcomes [6].

Having regular access to woodland is desirable for schools [7], and indeed Forest kindergartens take children to visit substantial forests every day, whatever the weather. When such children go to primary school, teachers observe a significant improvement in reading, writing, mathematics, social skills and many other areas.

3. History of Ecotourism

The term was first mentioned in the literature by Kenton Miller in 1978 [8]. It was initially used to describe nature-based travel to relatively undisturbed areas with an emphasis on education. However, the concept has developed to a scientifically based approach to the planning, management and development of sustainable tourism products and activities [9].

Ecotourism, responsible tourism, jungle tourism, and sustainable development have become prevalent concepts since the late 1980s, and ecotourism has experienced arguably the fastest growth of all sub-sectors in the tourism industry. The popularity represents a change in tourist perceptions, increased environmental awareness, and a desire to explore natural environments [10]. At times, such changes become as much a statement affirming one's social identity, educational sophistication, and disposable income as it has about preserving the Amazon rainforest or the Caribbean reef for posterity [11].

Beginning in 1990s, ecotourism has been growing 20% - 34% per year. In 2004, ecotourism/nature tourism was growing globally 3 times faster than the tourism industry as a whole [12].

4. Characteristics of Ecotourism

It includes an interpretation/learning experience, is delivered to small groups by small-scale businesses, and stresses local ownership, particularly for rural people. Ecotourism provides local benefits -

environmentally, culturally and economically [3].

5. Ecotourism Activities in Turkey

The term ecotourism is not well known in Turkey. Many mass tourism agencies collect their activities such as trek tour, safari tour or resting in national park under ecotourism title [9].

6. Study Area

In this paper, the features of Adnan Menderes Kocarli Urban Forest were evaluated with regard to the suitability for ecotourism and the importance of Adnan Menderes Kocarli Urban Forest for Kocarli and environs was mentioned. Landscape project have been designed with different activities and amenities.

Kocarli is a town and a district of Aydın Province, in the Aegean region of Turkey, 24 km from the city of Aydın. Kocarli today is a small town of 9,000 people. This is an attractive district of agricultural villages in the middle of the Büyük Menderes River valley on hillsides [13].

Study area is at the southwest of the Kocarli town center. It can be reached to the study area by 3 km. longed soil road. The area of the Adnan Menderes Kocarli Urban Forest is about 140 ha. Study area has typical mediterranean plants such as *Pinus btutia*, *Spartium junceum*, *Sarcopoterium spinosum* (Fig. 1).

7. Material and Methods

Materials of the research include topographic maps, photographs and literature related to the study area. Method comprises office and field stage. At the office stage, data were collected and landscape project was designed. At the field stage, field trip was performed. Suitable activities were selected for the landscape project of the Adnan Menderes Kocarli Urban Forest, including parking lots, vista terraces, playgrounds, camping area, picnic area with fire, picnic area without fire, cafe, restrooms, walking trails and bicycle trails, fountains, buffets, botanic track, rest place and artificial lake.

8. Results

Adnan Menderes Kocarli Urban Forest is unique place with its natural resources in the vicinity of Aydın. It can be reached easily to the area. Adnan Menderes Kocarli Urban Forest will attracts people from the settlements near Kocarli.

Urban forest has two entrances. North entrance is on the Kocarli-Söke road and south entrance is on the inner road. Landscape project of Adnan Menderes Kocarli Urban Forest provides quality recreational facilities and opportunities regardless of age, race, sex, wealth and ability. Picnic area with fire were located on the right side of the north entrance. Cafe, buffet, playground and restroom were proposed in the picnic area with fire. One of the parking lot is designed opposite the picnic area with fire. Vista terraces were suggested on the elevated points of the study area for watching scenery. As the study area has rich vegetation botanic track is thought as amenity. Three walking trails routes is created to ensure the connection between visitors and the nature. Short walking trails are 500 m. and 1000 m. Long walking trail is 7000 m. Long walking trail will be used as a bicycle trails.

Adnan Menderes Kocarli Urban Forest has important role on nature education of students. Camping area near the south entrance serves to gain self confidence, friendship and collaboration. Team games like orientering and slope parachute can be arranged in Adnan Menderes Kocarli Urban Forest.

9. Discussions

Ecotourism operations occasionally fail to live up to conservation ideals. It is sometimes overlooked that ecotourism is a highly consumer-centered activity, and that environmental conservation is a means to further economic growth [14].



Fig. 1: A view from Adnan Menderes Kocarli Urban Forest.

Although ecotourism is intended for small groups, even a modest increase in population, however temporary, puts extra pressure on the local environment and necessitates the development of additional infrastructure and amenities. The conversion of natural land to such tourist infrastructure is implicated in deforestation and habitat deterioration of butterflies in Mexico and squirrel monkeys in Costa Rica [15].

Ecotourism may appeal to ecologically and socially conscious individuals. Generally it focuses on volunteering, personal growth and environmental responsibility. Ecotourism typically involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. One of the goals of ecotourism is to offer tourists insight into the impact of human beings on the environment, and to foster a greater appreciation of our natural habitats [16].

Responsible ecotourism includes programs that minimize the negative aspects of conventional tourism on the environment and enhance the cultural integrity of local people. Therefore, in addition to evaluating environmental and cultural factors, an integral part of ecotourism is the promotion of recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation, and creation of economic opportunities for local communities [10].

Our families and young people are the foundation and future of our society. Many factors, including adequate education and health care, are essential for their strength and success. In addition, children and families need supportive environments that encourage positive behaviors and provide a respite from the challenges of urban living. Everyday nature in cities can help us to calm and cope, to recharge our ability to carry on [17].

Even though Aydın province has touristic shore settlements, it does not have recreational areas that serve in the province scale. Improving condition of the recreation areas and planning new urban forests are very important to develop Aydın's economical and social life.

Ensuring adequate public transportation is one of the most crucial point in the design process of Adnan Menderes Urban Forest.

10. Conclusions

In order to develop an effective ecotourism management in Turkey, following suggestion could be carried on [9].

A feasibility study should be realized, which identifies potential ecotourism development areas, including mountain, forest, wetland, coastal and island environments. Categorization determination of medium and high potential areas should be carried out under Law based criteria's.

Public awareness of the ecotourism is an important part of ecotourism application. This should be realize

under defined strategy and policy.

Local and national ecotourism development strategies and policy (increasing investment on tourism facilities, creating of employment opportunities, enhancing the public-stakeholders and experts' participation, etc.) should be developed.

Although ecotourism have some advantages for rural development and conservation of natural or cultural heritages, lack of the experience on ecotourism planning, decision making and finance problem for researches and model implementations are the significant constraints for ecotourism development.

Thus, the decision makers should take account that such planning, implementing and monitoring process of ecotourism is only for conservation of the natural resources and community well-being [9].

An environmental protection strategy must address the issue of ecotourists removed from the cause-and-effect of their actions on the environment. More initiatives should be carried out to improve their awareness, sensitize them to environmental issues, and care about the places they visit [11].

Urban vegetation and its management can significantly influence human health and environmental quality in and around cities. Thus, optimal vegetation designs and management practices are essential to sustain human and environmental well-being for current and future generations [18].

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